

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-10. (canceled).

11. (currently amended) A method of evaluating an educational program for children ages 0 to 5 years old, comprising the steps of:

(a) developing criteria which address strengths and weaknesses of the educational program, wherein said criteria includes each of (a1) through (a3) following:

5 (a1) an educational program staff to child classroom ratio;

(a2) educational program staff education qualifications including (a2-1) through (a2-3) following:

(a2-1) qualifications for staff educational degrees,

10 (a2-2) a qualification for duration of paid experience in educating children, and

(a2-3) qualifications for college course credits in child development; and

(a3) at least a predetermined majority of parents, having a child in the educational program, responding with parental responses indicating each of the following (a3-1) through (a3-3):

15 (a3-1) the educational program welcomes visits by the parents at substantially all times;

(a3-2) receiving at least adequate information on their child's daily activities in the educational program; and

20 (a3-3) receiving at least adequate information from the educational program on each of (a3-3-1) through (a3-3-3) following:

(a3-3-1) learning goals for children in the educational program,

(a3-3-2) teaching approaches for children in the educational program,

25 (a3-3-3) how child behavior is managed in a classroom environment;

- (b) determining how the criteria relates to the educational program, and storing results from said determining step for use by an electronic computational device;
- (c) determining from said stored results, a numerical value for each of a plurality of different portions of the results;
- 30 wherein said plurality of different portions of the results includes data for assigning such a numerical value to at least some of the following (c1) through (c5) following:
 - (c1) a classroom environment for the educational program;
 - (c2) accreditation by one or more of: (i) a state, local, or federal institution, and
 - 35 (ii) a non-governmental association that accredits a plurality of independently owned and operated child care facilities;
 - (c3) involvement of parents having a child in the educational program;
 - (c4) educational credentials of staff at the educational program; and
 - (c5) ratios of educational program staff to children in the educational program;
 - 40 (d) using a computational device for combining said assigned numerical values for obtaining an overall rating for the educational program, wherein said overall rating designates a quality of child care;
 - (e) assigning the overall rating to the educational program;
 - (f) providing a communications network interface for accessing the overall rating of
 - 45 the educational program; and
 - (g) transmitting the overall rating to a user accessing the network interface so that the overall rating can be presented to the user[[:]].

12-27. (canceled).

28. (currently amended) A method of evaluating an educational program for children ages 0 to 5 years old, comprising the steps of:

- 5 (a) developing educational program criteria for evaluating the educational program;

- (b) receiving data indicative of factors related to operation of the educational programs, wherein for each of said factors, its indicative data relates to one or more portions of the criteria;
- 10 (c) assigning a corresponding numerical value to each ~~to~~ of the factors, wherein for each of the factors, the corresponding numerical value is determined using the corresponding data ~~for~~ indicative of the factor;
- (d) sorting the numerical values of the factors to correspond with the one or more criteria to which the factors relate;
- 15 (e) for each of the portions ~~criterion~~ of the criteria, averaging the numerical values of the factors whose corresponding data relate to the portion, thereby giving to give a resulting numerical value for the portion~~criterion~~; and,
- (f) assigning an overall rating to the educational program based on the
- 20 resulting numerical values, wherein said overall rating is determined by an electronic computational device combining said resulting numerical values;
- (g) providing a communications network interface for accessing the overall rating of the educational program; and
- 25 (h) transmitting the overall rating to a user accessing the network interface so that the overall rating can be presented to the user;

wherein the criteria for the educational program include provisions for assessing: a classroom environment, an accreditation of the educational program, a parent involvement, staff credentials, a presence of a curriculum, and staff to child ratios;

- 30 wherein one or more of the provisions for assessment of the parent involvement include identifying levels and types of parent involvement by evaluating information indicative of basic communication and interaction of the parents having a child in the educational program with the educational program; and

wherein the information indicative of the basic communication and interaction

35 consists of at least most of (1) through (14) following:

- (1) educational program documents providing written information on the

educational program's philosophy, policies and procedures;

(2) educational program documents providing orientation to the educational program for both parent and child prior to or immediately following enrollment;

40 (3) (i) and (ii) following: (i) educational program reports timely providing notification of a change in educational program policies, and (ii) documentation indicating that a low percentage of the parents report lack of timely receiving such notification, wherein said low percentage is no more than 50%;

(4) a first high percentage of the parents report that the educational program
45 welcomes visits by the parents at all times, wherein said first high percentage is greater than 50%;

(5) a second high percentage of the parents report at least adequate information from the educational program on their child's physical and emotional well-being, wherein said second high percentage is greater than 50%;

50 (6) a third high percentage of the parents report at least adequate response by the educational program to parent concerns and suggestions, wherein said third high percentage is greater than 50%;

(7) a fourth high percentage of the parents report at least adequate information from the educational program on their child's daily activities, wherein said fourth high
55 percentage is greater than 50%;

(8) a fifth high percentage of the parents report being somewhat comfortable asking educational program staff for information on child development or parenting techniques, wherein said fifth high percentage is greater than 50%;

(9) educational program documents related to planned individual parent
60 conferences at least annually to discuss a child's progress and plans to meet learning goals;

(10) a sixth high percentage of the parents report receiving at least adequate information from the educational program on learning goals for children and teaching approaches, wherein said sixth high percentage is greater than 50%;

65 (11) a majority of the parents who have offered ideas or suggestions to the educational program report that the ideas or suggestions are implemented;

(12) a seventh high percentage of the parents report receiving at least adequate information from the educational program about community services, wherein said seventh high percentage is greater than 50%;

70 (13) educational program documents regularly include the [[parents in]]
parent's evaluation of the educational program; and,

(14) educational program staff and the parents report planned, successful activities in parent involvement directed to parenting, communication, participating or volunteering, learning at home, leadership or decision-making, and community
75 involvement.

29-47. (canceled).

48. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the overall rating is computed by averaging the numeric values.

49. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the overall rating is computed by weighting the numeric values and averaging the weighted numeric values.

50. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the overall rating comprises a four-star system, with one star or less representing a lowest rating and each successive increase in stars is indicative of a higher quality rating for the educational program, with four stars representing a highest rating.

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51. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein said step of developing includes:

placing a representation of the criteria of step (a) in an electronic database; and

entering said numerical values into the database once said numerical values are

5 determined by the computational device.

52. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein the step (b) of determining includes collecting educational program related data from at least some of: classroom observations, interviews with personnel of the educational program, a review of credentials of personnel of the educational program, and interviews with the children and parents patronizing the educational program.

53. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 11, wherein one of the numerical values is for the classroom environment of (c1), and the one numerical value is obtained from data related to at least most of (i) through (x) following: (i) space and furnishings occupied by the educational program, (ii) personal care routines used by the educational program, (iii) language activities provided by the educational program, (iv) reasoning activities provided by the educational program, (v) language materials provided by the educational program, (vi) reasoning materials provided by the educational program, (vii) child care program structure provided by the educational program, (viii) physical activities provided by the educational program, (ix) interaction between the staff and children in the educational program, and (x) interactions between parents of children in the educational program and the staff of the educational program.

54. (canceled).

55. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the overall rating comprises a ranking having four ranks, wherein the ranks are linearly ordered.

56. (currently amended) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein said step of developing includes:

placing a representation of the criteria of step (a) and the data indicative of the factors of step (b) in an electronic database;

- 5 entering said numerical values of step (c) into the database; and,
 calculating, within the database, the overall rating of the educational program.

57. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the receiving step includes collecting documents, classroom observations, interviews with personnel of the educational program, review of credentials of personnel of the educational program, interviews with the students and
5 parents patronizing the educational program, surveys, and other information gathering techniques.

58. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the provisions for assessing the classroom environment includes observing space and furnishings, personal care routines, language activities, reasoning activities, language materials, reasoning materials, program structure, physical
5 activities, interaction between staff and children, interactions between parents and staff.

59. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the provisions for assessing the accreditation of the educational program includes an analysis of whether the educational program is accredited by one or more of: (i) a state, local or federal institutions, and (ii) a non-
5 governmental association that accredits a plurality of independently owned and operated child care facilities.

60. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the provisions for assessing the staff credentials includes an analysis of the credentials of each staff member.

61. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 28, wherein the provisions for assessing the staff to child ratios

includes an analysis of whether the educational program meets target ratios of staff to child based on age groups.

62. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 61, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 0 to 18 months of age ranges from a low end of 1 staff person to 5 children, to a high end of 1 staff person to 3 children.

63. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 61, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 18 to 24 months of age ranges from a low end of 1 staff person to 5 children, to a high end of 1 staff person to 3 children.

64. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 61, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 24 to 36 months of age ranges from a low end of 1 staff person to 7 children, to a high end of 1 staff person to 5 children.

65. (currently amended) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 61, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 30 to 36 months of age ranges from a low end of 1 staff person to 8 children, to a high end of 1 staff person to 6 children.

66. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 61, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 36 to 48 months of age ranges from a low end of 1 staff person to 10 children, to a high end of 1 staff person to 8 children.

67. (previously presented) A method of evaluating an educational program according to Claim 61, wherein the target ratios for an age group of 48 to 60 months of age ranges from a low end of 1 staff person to 12 children, to a high end of 1 staff person to 8 children.

68. (previously presented) The method of Claim 11, wherein the communications network is the Internet.

69. (previously presented) The method of Claim 28, wherein the communications network is the Internet.